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Letter dated 25 April 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

With regard to the preparations of the voluntary national presentation of the State of Qatar on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals on the theme of education, I have the honour to transmit the national report of Qatar for circulation at the annual ministerial review of the high-level segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council of 2011 (see annex).

(Signed) Nassir Abdulaziz **Al-Nasser**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* E/2011/100.



Annex to the letter dated 25 April 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

[Original: Arabic]

Voluntary national presentation of Qatar on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals concerning education

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Summary

The State of Qatar has made major strides towards achieving its development goals. It has been successful in achieving universal primary education and has made great progress in strengthening gender equality. The National Development Strategy 2011-2016, which was formulated with a view to achieving Qatar National Vision 2030, will accelerate the pace, particularly in view of the fact that Qatar has made real progress in respect of international indicators relating to human development, as was shown in the most recent human development reports.

As part of the global Millennium Development Goals system, the present voluntary national presentation therefore sets forth a brief introduction to the state of education in Qatar. Qatar has been able to exceed implementation of the Goals and move to a more advanced stage where, with a view to implementing the National Development Strategy 2011-2016 to the fullest extent possible, the focus is on the quality rather than the availability of education, on providing outstanding Qatari models for achieving excellence in education and on compliance with the national strategy for high-quality education and educational outputs.

High-quality education is considered to be a strategic imperative. Leaders in Qatar do not believe in merely making education accessible, because that has already been achieved. Their aim is to make available excellent education that meets the most exacting global educational standards, as was affirmed in Qatar National Vision 2030 and the related strategic plans, which took into consideration global standards in all matters relating to the development and quality of education.

The voluntary national presentation highlights the major features of Qatar National Vision 2030 and the importance of education and of gender equality in education. It shows the progress that has been made towards realizing Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3: it has achieved universal primary education and has made great progress in strengthening gender equality and empowering women. It provides high-quality education, human rights education, family culture and sex education, and promotes access by girls to science and technology, e-learning and teacher training. The presentation also shows the extent to which the contribution made by Qatar to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals has increased as a result of initiatives and international support; the principal strategic successes; and future challenges and trends.

I. Introduction

1. Education plays a leading role in sustainable and comprehensive development. It is fundamental to human development, which is the true wealth of a State. All States are therefore concerned about education and have placed it at the forefront of their concerns, attempting to use every capability in order to achieve universality and ensure excellence at every level, viewing that as a basic human right in which all human societies are involved.

2. His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the Emir of the State, has been well aware of the importance of human resources and their development ever since he took over the reins of Government. That is clear from the advances that have been made at all levels and in every branch of the education system. High-quality education is considered to be a strategic demand and leaders in Qatar do not believe in merely making education accessible, because that has already been achieved. Their aim is to make available high-quality education that meets the most exacting global educational standards, as was affirmed in Qatar National Vision 2030 and the related strategic plans, which took into consideration global standards in all matters relating to the development and quality of education.

3. As a result of the close cooperation between all governmental and non-governmental institutions, sectors and machinery, Qatar has made major strides towards achieving its development goals. It has been successful in achieving universal primary education and has made great progress in strengthening gender equality. The National Development Strategy 2011-2016, which was formulated with a view to achieving Qatar National Vision 2030, will accelerate the pace, particularly in view of the fact that Qatar has made real progress in respect of international indicators relating to human development, as was shown in the most recent human development reports.

4. As part of the global Millennium Development Goals system, the present voluntary national presentation therefore sets forth a brief introduction to the state of education in Qatar. Qatar has been able to exceed implementation of the Goals and move to a more advanced stage where, with a view to implementing the National Development Strategy 2011-2016 to the fullest extent possible, the focus is on the quality rather than the availability of education, on providing outstanding Qatari models for achieving excellence in education and on compliance with the national strategy for high-quality education and educational outputs.

5. The present national presentation will be followed by a series of follow-up reports that will shed more light on the extent to which education has progressed in Qatar and on the education-related development projects, programmes and plans which all have high-quality education as their main aim and are linked to global programmes of excellence in that field.

II. Major features of Qatar National Vision 2030

6. The major features of Qatar National Vision 2030 and the strategy for education and training, and links with the Millennium Development Goals, are described below.

7. Qatar National Vision 2030 is based on a set of the guiding principles of the Constitution of Qatar, on directives from the wise leaders of the State, and on wide-ranging national consultations. Its aim is to establish a society that is based on justice, benevolence and equality. The four main focuses of the Vision are human development, social development, economic development and environmental development. Education and the development of human resources are intrinsic to the first issue on which the Vision focuses, namely, human development, that also includes education and training, health and the labour force.

8. The aim of the vision for the education and training sector is to construct an education system that keeps abreast of contemporary international standards and is the equal of the very best education systems in the world. That system will offer citizens opportunities to develop their capacities and provide them with the best possible training, in order to allow them to succeed in a changing world where the demand for knowledge is ever-increasing. It will promote analytical and critical thinking and develop the capacity for creativity and innovation.

9. A strategy for education and training was devised for the period 2011-2016, with a view to achieving the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030 that are related to the desired outcome of an educated population, as set forth below:

- An educational system that is the equal of the most outstanding international educational systems and will equip citizens with the wherewithal to meet their needs and the needs of Qatari society.
- A national framework for formal and informal educational programmes that will provide Qatari children and youth with the skills and incentives to participate in the development of society.
- Well-developed, independent educational institutions that are efficiently and autonomously managed in accordance with central guidelines, accountable and subject to oversight.
- An effective system for funding scientific research that is based on the principle of partnership between the public and private sectors and conducted in cooperation with specialized international organizations and leading international research centres.
- A significant international role in cultural and intellectual activity and scientific research.

10. The strategy for education and training was based on a set of guiding principles that include excellence, equality, inclusivity, efficiency, flexibility of movement and relocation, and comprises a number of initiatives, outcomes and development projects and programmes.

11. The aims that Qatar National Vision 2030 seeks to achieve, the pillars on which it is built and the goals sought by the education and training sector are closely linked to the education-related Millennium Development Goals. Similarly, the initiatives of the strategy for education and training 2011-2016 consist of programmes, projects and activities designed to advance Goals 2 and 3, including, inter alia, the following:

- An infrastructure plan to ensure sufficient capacity for all students.
- Mandatory kindergarten and secondary education.

- Continual development of national curricular standards in order to meet international standards.
- A special education system to ensure that disabled children receive high-quality education.
- Adjustment of educational programmes to meet the various needs of students.
- Up-to-date, flexible programmes to complement basic education; training opportunities for adults.

III. Importance of education and of gender equality in the field of education

12. The wise leaders of Qatar have accorded education great importance, as may be seen from the way that all aspects, components and levels of the educational system have developed. Because the State is so interested in investing in human resources as the basis for the comprehensive development process, for which education provides the infrastructure, an endowment fund has been allocated to expenditure on education, using income from Qatar's gas resources.

13. The education community is notable for its equality and lack of gender-based discrimination, as will be made clear by the indicators and measures that will appear in the present report.

IV. Progress made in implementing the two Goals

A. Achieving universal primary education

Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling

14. Under its wise leadership, Qatar has taken care to provide education for all the children on its territory, as is shown by the set of measures that have been taken. The Constitution of Qatar provides, in article 25, that education is one of the basic pillars of social progress which the State shall ensure, foster and endeavour to spread; and, in article 49, that all citizens have the right to education; and the State shall endeavour to make general education compulsory and free of charge in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations of the State. The State determined that education should be compulsory in Law No. 25 of 2001, and Decree-Law No. 37 of 2002, concerning the establishment of the Supreme Education Council, directed that high-quality education should be attained in order to meet State requirements, that various and alternative education systems should be provided, and that creativity and educational excellence should be promoted. In 2005, Qatar became a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, articles 28, 29 and 30 of which relate to education, leisure and cultural pursuits. The national plan for education for all was prepared in 2003 on the basis of the six goals of education for all that were adopted at the Dakar Forum in April 2000, and progress was evaluated in a report in 2008. Those goals are closely linked to the education-related Millennium Development Goals.

15. The Supreme Education Council also formulated a policy for the support of special education, with the aim of providing an advisory framework for all schools, determining responsibility for students with disabilities and learning difficulties and overcoming all obstacles to their acquisition of all the requisite educational experiences. That policy focuses on the needs of students enrolled in education from kindergarten to the end of the secondary stage. Guidance is provided by a recommended model for educational support that sets forth arrangements and facilities for the planning and implementation of education and learning strategies, evaluation methods and the preparation of reports. Roles and responsibilities are identified for all parties involved in the implementation of the policy, in partnership with those in charge, institutions and the parties concerned with that group of students. The support strategy is based on a set of principles that include the right of the student to obtain appropriate education and to be provided with a wide-ranging and balanced educational experience that is appropriate for his personal needs; his right to an evaluation and determination of his needs and a response thereto; his right to be treated with respect and be provided with appropriate opportunities for learning and personal development. Education for students with disabilities and learning difficulties is considered to be the joint responsibility of schools and society.

1. Numbers enrolled in primary education

16. There has been an appreciable rise in the number of students enrolled in primary education, as shown in the table below:

Table 1

Students enrolled in primary education between 2005/2006 and 2009/2010

Year	Number of students		Total
	Government	Private	
2005/2006	38 008	32 919	70 927
2006/2007	37 793	37 006	74 799
2007/2008	38 201	39 331	77 532
2008/2009	38 598	46 047	84 645
2009/2010	39 469	49 213	88 682

17. From the above table, we can see that the number of students enrolled in primary education increased from 70,927 in 2005/2006 to 88,682 in 2009/2010.

2. Net enrolment rates in primary education

18. The country's education system in Qatar has grown in recent decades: where there were just a few schools, in 2009, there are some 600 Government and private schools, covering all stages of basic education, spread throughout the country and open to all. One of the most important consequences of this expansion has been the accessibility of the education system to all elements of society. That in turn has led to an increase in the number of students of both genders and increases in enrolment at all levels of education, especially primary education. Enrolment rates in primary education for both boys and girls have increased continuously, reflecting greater

opportunities for access to primary education in the State. The following table shows net enrolment:

Table 2
Net enrolment rates
(Percentage)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Net enrolment</i>
2005-2006	91
2006-2007	95.2
2007-2008	96.8
2008-2009	96.7

19. These primary education enrolment rates make Qatar a leader in providing extensive education opportunities to all social classes, and to males and females without discrimination or exception.

3. Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 and reaching the last grade of primary education

20. One of the indicators of a successful and effective education system is a low dropout rate, at the primary level in particular, and the length of time that students remain in the education system, especially in the early grades. The proportion of pupils starting grade 1 and reaching the last grade of primary education is considered an indicator of the universality of primary education. In Qatar, the completion rate of students enrolled in Government schools is high, having risen from 93 per cent in 2003 to 98.6 per cent in 2008. Moreover, the remainder did not necessarily drop out of primary education. They may have merely left the country or transferred to private schools, which have become widely available in the State. Those rates mean that Qatar is close to having achieved universal education among students registered at the primary level, which is attributable to its commitment to compulsory primary education. Alongside that commitment by the State, the role of families in the education process should not be downplayed: the desire of families to raise the education levels of their children of both genders also contributes to students staying in school throughout the primary levels.

4. Literacy rates among females and males between the ages of 15 and 24

21. The Qatari education system has not only succeeded in expanding the country's education grid, achieved high levels of primary school enrolment, ensured that students remain in the education system over the long term, and minimized dropout rates, it has also succeeded in raising educational attainment in all sectors of society, notably among youth of both genders. Most youths in Qatar today are literate. Between 1990 and 2009, the literacy rate ranged from 95 to 99.8 per cent for females and from 98 to 99.4 per cent for males.

B. Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women

Goal: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015

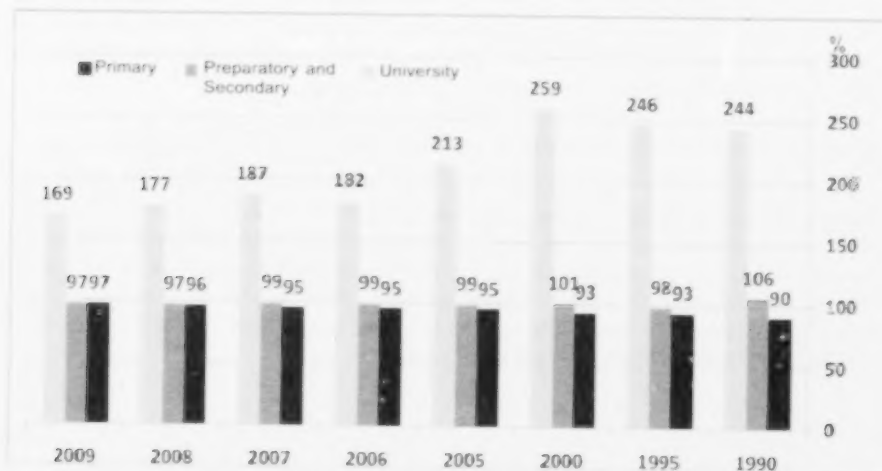
Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education

22. Empowerment and, in particular, the empowerment of women, is regarded as one of the mainstays of social modernization and comprehensive development. In order to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and bring about changes that will end manifestations of inequality in relations, opportunities, possibilities, incomes and distribution of power, the Millennium Development Goals regard empowering women and improving their social, economic and political status as a basic element of development. That is affirmed in the purpose of Goal 3, which is to eliminate gender disparities in a number of vital areas, notably, access to education and economic and political participation.

23. In Qatar, women have benefited in recent decades from Government efforts to create an advanced and open society based on equality of opportunity for all elements of Qatari society. That is evident from the rise in the rates of participation by women at all levels of education, notably in higher education, where women are in the majority. In academic year 2008-2009, 4,612 of the 5,604 Qatari students registered at the University of Qatar were female, a ratio of women to men of 460 per cent. When all the University students of recent years, both Qatari and non-Qatari nationals, are taken into account, including those studying at the University of Qatar, enrolled in private universities and studying abroad, the ratio of females to males decreases but remains high, at approximately 170 per cent for 2009 (see figure 1). There has been a slight decline in the ratio of females to males in higher education since 2005, because of the inauguration of studies at universities in Education City, which have enrolled large numbers of males.

Figure 1

Ratio of females to males in primary, secondary and university education, 1990-2009

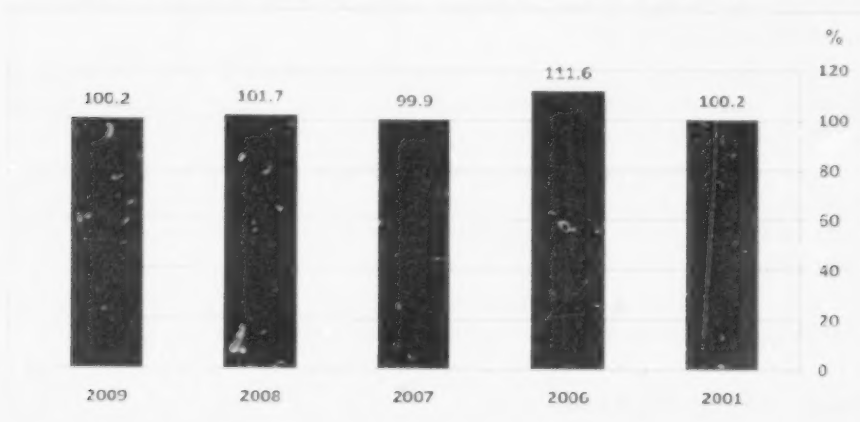


Source: Millennium Development Goals in Qatar, 2010.

24. In recent years, the education system in Qatar has expanded and eliminated disparities that were prevalent at certain stages of education, including gender disparity at all levels. Progress has been made towards realizing the principle of equality of opportunity for all citizens of Qatar, in accordance with the Constitution, article 19, which provides that the State shall maintain the pillars of the society and ensure security, stability and equal opportunities for all citizens. This principle was also provided for in Qatar National Vision 2030, one of the major goals of which is to establish a society based on justice and equality. The increase of over 50 per cent in the participation of Qatari women across the education system during the 2000-2008 period demonstrates the extent to which gender disparity has been eliminated at all levels of education across the State, ahead of the 2015 target date. The increase in the ratio of girls to boys at all levels of education in Qatar has resulted in an increase in female literacy rates relative to those of males, especially among younger people (see figure 2).

Figure 2

Ratio of female literacy to male literacy in the 15-24 year age group, 2001-2009



Source: Millennium Development Goals in Qatar, 2010.

C. Achieving high-quality education

25. As we noted in the introduction to the present report, when discussing the connection between advances in education in the country and political decisions at the highest level, the goal is not merely to ensure access to education, but to ensure access to high-quality education. His Highness the Emir laid the foundations for achieving that goal with his decision of November 2002 whereby the Supreme Council for Education was established. That decision, article 6, called for the quality of education to be improved in response to the needs of the State, by providing various alternative education systems that would promote creativity and educational excellence.

26. The most important results of that decision include the following:

(a) Independent schools have been established, and curriculum design methods have emerged that take into account global developments, teaching

methods, collaborative work and community participation; encourage creativity and innovation; adopt curriculum standards for most academic subjects; and aspire to a culture of excellence that will pave the way for improvements in quality, the development of human capacities and increased levels of performance;

(b) An evaluation system has been instituted, whereby a qualified board is responsible for evaluating all elements of education, employing scientific tools that measure all aspects of performance. With a view to the continuous development of all facets of the education process, it gives the teacher a major role in evaluating students, measuring skill growth and nurturing student talents;

(c) Community participation by all relevant parties has been mobilized in order to ensure high-quality education;

(d) E-learning is increasingly being introduced in order to make full use of information and communications technology, and such modern learning tools as CD-ROM and the Internet are used;

(e) The physical requirements for high-quality education are being provided, including outstanding school buildings equipped with libraries, laboratories, workshops and playing fields;

(f) Professional development programmes are offered for administrators and teachers, and the field of education has been professionalized through implementation of a certification system for education professionals;

(g) Branches of foreign universities have been opened in Qatar through the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, and a Community College has been established, diversifying the options for university education;

(h) Initial steps have been taken to implement a proposal for accrediting schools, in order to ensure uniform quality standards in all schools in the State.

D. Human rights education

27. Great care has been taken with regard to the teaching of human rights concepts and principles, given their importance to the formation of national sentiments and the promotion of positive values in developing young minds. The goal is to enhance students' confidence in their Arab and Islamic identity, their pride in their country and interest in working for its advancement, their awareness of cultures in the world around them, and a positive attitude towards relations between their country and the rest of the world's States, based on peace, understanding, cooperation and mutual respect.

28. Human rights concepts have been integrated into curricula in various ways, including as self-standing units and as the subjects of such in-class or extracurricular activities as drawing or other graphic arts. Curricula and textbooks cover various human rights issues, including political and civil rights, economic rights, the rights of the child, women's rights, social and cultural rights, and the rights of ageing and disabled persons.

29. Some schools in Qatar have produced new textbooks on human rights. They include a book on citizenship and character-building that addresses the rights of the

child, social responsibilities, democracy, citizenship, charity and volunteer work. Other books address human rights and citizenship.

30. National standards have been developed for the following academic subjects: Arabic language, English language, mathematics and the sciences. Schools are given the freedom to choose the content and curriculum most suitable for achieving their goals.

31. The diversification of education curricula allows both the student and the parent or guardian to select a school that matches the student's interests. National curriculum standards have been developed that contribute to the learner's personal growth in a holistic fashion, develop his cognitive capacities and guide him to new levels of critical, creative and analytical thinking. They also allow scope for free expression of opinion, scientific study and dialogue, and foster openness to the opinions of others, attention to personal health and concern for the stability of the surrounding environment.

32. A general framework for ethics education has also been designed in order to encourage students between kindergarten and secondary level to think about moral values and their practical application with respect to themselves, others, the society around them and the world in general. The ethics curriculum also aims to deepen their sense of responsibility and encourage them to live healthy lifestyles, build good relationships, take an interest in others and develop self-confidence. It fosters the values of respect and concern for others and promotes cooperation, caring, equality, love, peace and tolerance. It also encourages such social and civic values as respect for the law, good citizenship, involvement in community activities, truthfulness, integrity and honesty. It further fosters respect for the culture and civilizational heritage of Qatar and awareness of the need to preserve both the cultural heritage and the environment.

33. There are a number of other classroom and extra-curricular activities that foster a culture of human rights, including student parliament, various school groups and students' rights groups.

E. Family culture and sex education

34. A number of health services are provided to students of both genders, including first aid treatment and medical tests. School nursing staff have been trained to offer both health services and health education to students, and health education programmes offered by schools include the following: a behavioural guide for students; the "I am growing" programme for girl students; "No to drugs", "No to smoking" and "No to obesity" programmes; and other programmes that are conducted in cooperation with civil society organizations or such Government agencies as the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, the Supreme Council for Health and the Ministry of the Interior.

35. A family culture curriculum has been designed in order to provide students with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence needed for successful social relations. The curriculum covers a number of moral, social, cultural, physical, spiritual, sexual and emotional areas. It is constructed on the basis of three major components: educational content, teaching methods and assessment techniques.

F. Encouraging girls to go into sciences and technology

36. The Education for a New Era initiative is designed to promote gender equality by setting standards to ensure that all subjects, including the sciences, are taught in the same way to both sexes. The State is encouraging girls to enrol in scientific specialties, in both the University of Qatar and Education City. As noted earlier, female enrolment in higher learning is several times higher than that of males.

G. E-learning

37. Qatari educational institutions, from kindergarten to secondary school, are well equipped with information and communications technology infrastructure. Many students are supplied in school with personal computers that are comparable to the personal computers used by schools in Europe. As part of the Education for a New Era initiative, teachers have received intensive training in incorporating information and communications technology into the teaching and learning processes. Through the Supreme Council for Information and Communication Technology, Qatar has implemented a number of initiatives to make information and communication technology an integral part of a student's educational experience. Standards have been set for information technology courses, and students are taught how to use computers to enhance both their education and their lives in general.

H. Teacher training

38. Great care has been taken by schools to develop the capacities of teaching staff. Professional standards have been developed for teachers and school administrators. Extra time is set aside to develop the capacities of educators who serve in independent schools. Teacher evaluation processes have been enhanced and a programme has been established for the professional certification of teachers and administrators, who are required to produce credentials demonstrating that they possess skills, knowledge, capacities and experience in their field of work. A large number of training programmes have been conducted, as may be seen from the following table:

Table 3
Number of participants in various training programmes, 2005-2010

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Number of trainees</i>
Independent school teacher training	587
Independent school board of trustees member training	968
Administrator programmes	1 261
E-learning	615
Learning resource centres	1 174
Early childhood development	649
Additional educational support	1 316
Arabic language	921
English language	973

V. Increased contribution made by Qatar to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (initiatives and international support)

A. Reach Out to Asia

41. Reach Out to Asia was established in December 2005 by Sheikha Mayassa bint Hamad Al Thani, the consort of His Highness the Emir of Qatar, and operates under the auspices of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development. A private charitable foundation, its purpose is to expand the scope of the Qatar Foundation's mission to include the Asian continent and the Asian expatriate community.

42. The mission of Reach Out to Asia is to assist local communities in overcoming obstacles, and create links that facilitate the achievement of high-quality primary and secondary education and thereby help to achieve some of the Millennium Development Goals and the goals of the Education for All movement launched by the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It also seeks to foster human relationships among communities, create a safe educational environment, ensure equality of opportunity in education and provide educational aid to crisis-affected regions.

43. The agency has two main programmes: Reach Out to Asia Qatar, which focuses its efforts on Qatar, and another programme dedicated to Asia and the Middle East.

44. Reach Out to Asia has educational programmes in several countries that have been identified as requiring immediate assistance. Twelve countries have been given priority: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Iraq, Lebanon, Nepal, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Viet Nam and Yemen.

45. Among its many accomplishments, Reach Out to Asia has collected more than \$28 million in donations; provided relief to areas of Pakistan affected by the 2005 earthquake; rebuilt and equipped 18 schools in Kashmir, Pakistan, and provided educational opportunities for 3,000 children affected by the earthquake; organized the first ever trip to Pakistan of Qatari student volunteer, a group comprising 65 pupils from seven schools; established, in cooperation with its partners, two schools in Jalozai camp, an action which indirectly benefited some 20,000 persons; equipped 40 schools that were destroyed in the Israeli aggression against southern Lebanon in 2006; organized the *Atfaluna* (Our Children) campaign to encourage Qatari schoolchildren to make donations to their counterparts in Lebanon; built and equipped an educational centre in Aceh, Indonesia; rebuilt 960 schools in Jogjakarta, Indonesia; established, with the participation of leading universities from around the world, the Knowledge Network, which provides educational resources for the development of Asian communities; and launched a project to build an elementary school, a secondary school and a vocational centre in Vihear Suork, Kandal Province, Cambodia.

46. In October 2008, Reach Out to Asia, in partnership with Save the Children Sweden, implemented an educational project in the Gaza Strip for persons suffering psychological trauma. The project created 16 safe areas for emergency education and hired 48 recent graduates to work as teachers. Reach Out to Asia also partnered

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Number of trainees</i>
Social sciences	272
Mathematics	1 200
Sciences	1 160
Physical education	102
School self-assessment	335
Computers and information technology	116
Training of trainers	187
Academic English programmes for mathematics and science teachers	461
Total	12 297

39. Ministry employees have also been trained for integration into independent schools, as shown by the following table:

Table 4
Training of Ministry employees for integration into independent schools

<i>Field</i>	<i>Number</i>
Fast track training of female primary school teachers	21 women teachers
Second track training of male and female science and mathematics teachers	121 men and women teachers
Third track training of female early education teachers	140 women teachers
Training of Ministry of Education administrators on the principal track	70 principals
Training of mathematics and science teachers for semi-independent schools	200 men and women teachers
Training of vice-principals for semi-independent schools	40 vice-principals
Training of coordinators for semi-independent schools	40 coordinators

40. With effect from the 2007/2008 academic year, the Supreme Education Council began funding three-year training programmes for female assistant teachers for all levels from kindergarten to second grade. The course was offered by the University of Qatar and has been completed by 165 assistant teachers.

with Islamic Relief Worldwide to rehabilitate 22 schools in the Gaza Strip and train 300 teachers, with a view to improving the educational process. Some 21,000 students benefited from this project.

47. In 2007, Reach Out to Asia began working with its Syrian partners on improving the quality of education and integrating Iraqi and Syrian students. The project includes the construction of a community learning centre to provide training, social and cultural activities, business programmes and other educational services to students, teachers and community members.

48. In Nepal, some 11,000 students, 40 teachers and 55,000 community members from eight schools are benefiting from the agency's programme on disaster preparedness and response.

49. Reach Out to Asia has been active in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Indonesia since 2008, and its ongoing projects in those countries have benefited countless persons, whether students, teachers or other target groups.

B. The Al Fakhoora fund

50. In January 2009, Her Highness Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned launched the Al Fakhoora international campaign to protect students in the Gaza Strip. The campaign was launched after Israeli occupation forces attacked United Nations schools, including Al Fakhoora School, in the course of their aggression that began on 28 December 2008 and continued to 18 January 2009. The campaign is named after Al Fakhoora School, where 42 persons were killed and 100 others wounded after they had taken refuge there.

51. With start-up capital in the amount of \$200 million, the Al Fakhoora fund was established in order to rebuild the educational sector in the Gaza Strip. Her Highness Sheikha Mozah contributed half of the start-up capital.

52. The fund has allocated resources for the immediate execution of a project to build several schools in the Gaza Strip that are designed to accommodate 1,000 students at all educational levels. Resources have also been allocated to fund 100 scholarships over a 10-year period for Palestinian students studying in Qatar and other countries.

53. Qatar launched the Al Fakhoora satellite channel, which will operate for a limited time, in order to support education in the Gaza Strip and collect donations for reconstruction. A website bearing the same name was also launched as part of a media campaign in support of Palestinian educational institutions.

C. Education Above All foundation

54. Established by Her Highness Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned, Education Above All is an international foundation that seeks to protect and foster the right to education in areas that are experiencing or threatened by crisis, conflict or war, in implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provides that everyone has the right to education, and in accordance with the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, articles 50, 94, 108 and 220.

55. The foundation seeks to achieve its goals by means of the following:

(a) Conducting studies and research, organizing seminars, forums and conferences, and executing multimedia campaigns, with a view to disseminating and deepening knowledge and raising individual, social and international awareness of the dangers that crises, conflicts and wars pose to education, and their impact on international peace and development;

(b) Monitoring, investigating and documenting violations committed against the educational system in time of crisis, conflict and war;

(c) Developing international legal machinery to defend the right to education and protect against any violation thereof, and pursuing and prosecuting the perpetrators of such violations.

D. Initiative to support education in Iraq

56. Further to the work being done by the International Fund for Higher Education in Iraq, this initiative was launched in 2003 by Her Highness Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned with a view to fulfilling her commitment to implement the recommendations of the Paris Conference on the Right to Education in Crisis-Affected Countries.

57. This initiative is part of Her Highness's commitment to defend the right to education, particularly in time of crisis, and is indicative of the special attention she gives to supporting the educational system in Iraq. That support is embodied by the establishment of the International Fund for Higher Education in Iraq and the launch of an initiative to support Iraqi academics.

58. The initiative, which will run from 2009 to 2013, includes the following components:

(a) An international academic conference in Baghdad on the Iraqi national educational identity.

(b) Development of a new curriculum for Iraq and training of Iraqi experts for that purpose.

(c) Rehabilitation of the Iraqi higher education system by building capacity and developing plans.

(d) Development of plans and programmes to qualify trainers and train teachers in all subjects.

(e) Development and implementation of informal education and illiteracy eradication programmes for women, youth and street children.

59. The goals of the project include fostering academic research in Iraq and enabling Iraqi researchers to benefit from the research facilities available at the Qatar Science and Technology Park and from the research fund of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development. The project will also give outstanding Iraqi students the opportunity to study at one of the international universities in Education City.

E. The Haiti project

60. The Haiti project is in the planning phase.

F. Student scholarships

61. Qatar offers scholarships to students. Some 150 scholarships have been awarded to students from 28 countries.

VI. Principal strategic successes

62. Qatar is undergoing comprehensive change in all aspects of life, including education, which has all the attention and support of the country's able leaders. The education system and its products are the foundation of a comprehensive and sustainable national development effort that will enable Qatari society to compete internationally in the age of globalization and knowledge-based economies. It has become a national duty and an obligation to society to develop education.

63. Set forth below are some of Qatar's initiatives and successes in education.

A. Education for a New Era initiative

64. This initiative has brought about change in all education tracks, systems and structures, with a view to offering an outstanding education that is in step with the times, enables students to think critically and learn independently, teaches the life skills that individuals need in order to understand the demands of the times and contributes to the advancement of society.

65. The core principles of this initiative are autonomy, accountability, diversity and choice.

The initiative emphasizes the following:

- Educational opportunities must be available to all members of society, in accordance with their desires and needs.
- Education must extend to all members of society, including persons with disabilities.
- National curriculum standards must be established, in accordance with relevant international standards and norms.
- Teachers should continue their professional development through training programmes, including programmes on curriculum standards and teaching methods.
- Technology for education should be used in both the teaching and learning process.
- National professional standards must be established for the education sector.

- A professional approach must be developed towards the education sector and the quality of teachers and principals improved by developing specific criteria for licensing school teachers and principals.

B. Establishment of Education City

66. In 1995, with the aim of accelerating human development in Qatar and the region, His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani decided to establish the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development.

67. Education City is the principal project and pioneering initiative of the Qatar Foundation, which is headed by Her Highness Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned. This project brings together several institutions with a view to setting educational standards in the region, from the earliest stages of the education process to graduate studies.

68. Branches of six leading American universities form the heart of Education City. Those branches offer some of the same prestigious programmes that are taught at their respective universities in the United States of America and maintain the same quality standards. Alongside those universities stands the Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies, which is locally based and offers graduate programmes. Education City's first European partner, HEC Paris, opened its doors in 2010 and offers executive training programmes and conducts research.

69. The primary goal of Education City is to establish high-quality university programmes that will build the capacities of the region's human capital. The focus of the most recent phase of the project has been on achieving synergy and efficiency, in order to ensure that the various institutions increasingly function as a coherent, multidisciplinary institution.

70. Each of the institutions strives to improve its research programmes, frequently working in cooperation with local partners. This will strengthen their integration into Qatar's social fabric and offer students the opportunity to become part of the national and international research communities.

C. Qatar Debate

71. Qatar Debate was established in 2002 with the aim of raising future generations to coexist with and accept others, their cultures and cultural legacies. It also seeks to foster the desire to engage in dialogue and debate, and to encourage youth to take initiative and express their opinions freely and courageously.

D. World Innovation Summit for Education

72. In 2009, Her Highness Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned launched the World Innovation Summit for Education, an annual summit of decision makers from various sectors who share the belief that access to high-quality education is a fundamental human right and a condition of participation in society. Through practical initiatives at all levels of education, the World Innovation Summit for Education aims to make a real difference in the lives of ordinary people throughout

the world. The annual World Innovation Summit for Education Award for Education is given every year to individuals or teams who have made a significant contribution in the field of education.

73. Other World Innovation Summit for Education initiatives include the September 2010 symposium for Arab ministers of education, organized in cooperation with the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization and the World Bank. Symposium participants made a commitment to a common and transparent system for assessing quality of education. In October 2010, the World Innovation Summit for Education organized a leadership seminar for 12 recently appointed university presidents from developing countries.

E. Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned Award

74. The World Innovation Summit for Education Awards are designed to identify and promote innovative educational projects from around the world. Since 2009, six winners have been chosen every year. Past winners include the Nanhi Kali project to provide education to needy girls; the Widows Alliance Network, which helps widows in Ghana integrate into society; and the Mother-Child Education Programme, a Turkish initiative that aims to educate and support preschool children from under-resourced communities by training mothers to be the "first educator".

75. The process of selecting the World Innovation Summit for Education Award winners is under way. This award is the only major international prize for education and it is expected to become the internationally recognized standard. The 2011 winners will be announced at the World Innovation Summit for Education Summit, which will take place in Doha from 1 to 3 November 2011.

VI. Future challenges and trends

76. The increased level of educational attainment of Qatari youth of both sexes demonstrates beyond a doubt that the educational system has made a qualitative leap. But the question is whether that is sufficient to meet the evolving needs of the Qatari labour market and respond to the challenges that will face Qatari society in the future, and whether it is sufficient to help Qatar fulfil its aspiration to build a prosperous society that is capable of engaging with other societies and playing a significant role in the global partnership for development, as set out in the Pillars of the Qatar National Vision 2030. A further concern is whether current levels of educational attainment are adequate, if the goals set out in the National Vision, particularly those that call for an educated population and a capable and motivated workforce, are to be met.

77. Qatar's economic growth, the move towards a diversified economic base and increased dependence on expatriate labour have an impact on and pose a challenge to the educational system. One of the most significant challenges facing the educational system is to ensure capacity to meet the requirements of the labour market and Qatari society's need for skilled graduates. The system must also address the question of teacher turnover and its effect on the continuity of the educational process, and the effect of a life of ease on student attitudes towards education and learning.

78. The recent growth in Qatar's population has increased the number of students and, consequently, raised school enrolment at all educational levels, necessitating the opening of more schools, both in and outside Doha.

79. There is no doubt that Qatar's development aspirations require it to develop citizens who are qualified and capable in all areas, and able to take on future challenges and responsibilities. This goal cannot be achieved without building the capacities of Qataris, in particular youth. With increased theoretical knowledge, practical experience and administrative training, they will be ready to contribute to the country's overall development.

80. Qatar's future educational goals are the following:

- Create a comprehensive database on education in Qatar.
- Continue to increase the educational attainment of students in order to achieve high-quality education.
- Increase community participation in and the contribution of all sectors to education.
- Foster the Arab and Islamic national and cultural identity of Qatari society.
- Emphasize the principles of the Education for a New Era initiative.
- Foster scientific research and its applications.
- Promote the continuing development of education sector personnel.
- Strengthen excellence programmes in private schools and, in particular, e-learning programmes.
- Raise students' motivation to learn and to continue their education, and promote the role of the family in learning and education by fostering a culture of continual appraisal.
- Make greater efforts in the future with regard to preparing secondary school students who wish to enter the labour market.



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High-level segment: annual ministerial review

**Letter dated 2 May 2011 from the Permanent Representative of
Mauritius to the United Nations addressed to the President of the
Economic and Social Council**

Attached herewith is the national report of the Republic of Mauritius on progress towards the achievement of the internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, for the annual ministerial review to be held during the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2011 of the Economic and Social Council (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Council, under item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda.

(Signed) Milan J. N. Meertarbhan
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* E/2011/100.



**Annex to the letter dated 2 May 2011 from the Permanent
Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations addressed to the
President of the Economic and Social Council**

Voluntary national presentation of Mauritius

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Summary

Mauritius development policies are anchored in the country's vision of a future that is prosperous for all, promoted by an inclusive society where there is a myriad of opportunities and equality of treatment. Achievement of this vision is centred on the mission of putting people first to ensure inclusive development.

Over the years, the country has faced external economic shocks entwined with domestic economic issues like slow economic growth, rising unemployment, a high-budget deficit and an excessive public debt. With a view to securing the country's survival, especially in a highly competitive, open and globalized economy, the Government has embarked on a 10-year economic reform programme structured around four main pillars, namely, fiscal consolidation and public sector efficiency, improving trade competitiveness, improving the investment climate and democratizing the economy through participation, social inclusion and sustainability.

In this regard, strategies have been crafted and the main economic sectors have been consolidated while development of new sectors is pursued relentlessly. In the same vein, Mauritius has one of the most generous welfare systems in Africa. It provides free health care and free education, among other services. In the field of education, Mauritius is well on its way to attain its target with regard to the Millennium Development Goals. Many countries in Africa look to Mauritius, the region's strongest performer on "doing business indicators", as a source of good practices for reform. Mauritius is well ranked at the 72nd position on the Human Development Index while it is pitched at the 45th position on the Human Poverty Index.

Like in most countries, patterns of employment in Mauritius have also been changing. This is mainly due to the significant structural shift in the Mauritian economy over the past decades, with an economy previously dominated by agriculture and manufacturing being overtaken by a burgeoning service-based one. The shift to a service economy and the resultant growth of opportunities in this work is not unproblematic.

Consequently, in the absence of natural resources and amid fierce global competition, Mauritius faces the challenge of sustaining its socio-economic growth in an eco-friendly environment. To this end, Mauritius is challenged to continuously improve its competitiveness within the global economy by enhancing its creative, skilled and competent human resource base, among other measures. Mauritius also has to reduce inequality and exclusion through effective socio-economic integration while maintaining and strengthening the welfare State. There is an urgent need to pursue sustainable development through the use of renewable energy while reducing dependency on fossil fuels and providing water to all throughout the year.

The country is also sensitive to the plight of the poor and is committed to eradicate absolute poverty. Explicit policy interventions focus on empowering the poor as a sustainable means of breaking the cycle of poverty.

While external assistance is beneficial for facing the future with confidence, such support must be aligned with national challenges and ownership, and donors must adopt a joint programming modality, coordinated interventions and aid harmonization following priority areas identified by the country. Policy coherence needs to be promoted at different levels, namely, within development cooperation,

between the aid and non-aid policies of donor countries/agencies and between donors and recipients. Too much is at stake for anything else.

It is also in line with the standard agenda enunciated by the Education for All goals and the Millennium Development Goals to which Mauritius subscribes, that the transformations in the education system have to be understood.

Education has always held a place of choice in the country's national development strategy. Education policies focus on the major pillars of increasing access, improving quality and broadening equity. The changes witnessed since independence in 1968 and that are backed by heavy investment in education have resulted in high enrolment rates from the pre-primary to secondary levels, with the national literacy rate standing at about 85 per cent in 2011.

Understandably, there are challenges in respect of achieving the goal of quality education for all. A cohort analysis demonstrates that out of the 100 children entering grade 1, only 27 successfully complete the 13-year school cycle, thereby indicating that there is a dropout rate, and subsequent wastage in the system. In addition to this internal inefficiency, the system, especially at the primary level, is plagued by rote learning, teaching based on tests and private tuition.

The Education and Human Resource Strategy Plan 2008-2020, the result of a consensual debate on the system, has highlighted eight broad objectives ranging from pre-primary to sector management. Implementation of the Plan has resulted in such groundbreaking actions as the introduction of innovative pedagogical practices, the review of the curricula of all education subsectors for increased relevance, the widening of access to upper secondary education and the holistic development of learners. A digital revolution has also been triggered in a bid to transform traditional forms of classroom transactions and teaching-learning processes.

The notions of quality and equity are equally central to the provision of education. Pro-poor policies have resulted in the implementation of inclusive measures. Programmes that take children with special education needs on board and those coming from underprivileged areas and pockets of poverty have been spearheaded in close collaboration with community-based organizations and other stakeholders. As Mauritius positions itself as an early childhood development hub for the region, an institutional and regulatory framework for the provision of early childhood care and education has been put in place to ensure school readiness for children and children readiness for school.

As indicated above, the efforts are concerted ones. There have been ongoing efforts to address the education of boys and girls on equal footing. If there is no gender disparity in enrolment, as evidenced by a gender parity index of 1.0 at the primary level and 1.1 at secondary, new areas of gender disparity have emerged. Over the past few years, the performance of boys has been observed to be lagging behind that of girls at all levels in education.

On the other hand, in a bid to support life-skills programmes, basic and continuing education and literacy programmes dispensed through non-formal institutions, other measures have been introduced so as to provide a second chance to those who have fallen out of the educational system at a young age. The challenge is thus to ensure that all citizens find ways and means of securing a sustainable livelihood.

Part A

I. Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in relation to education

Brief history of Mauritius

1. Mauritius is an island nation located in the south-west of the Indian Ocean. It is part of the Mascarene Islands with the French island of Réunion to the south-west and the island of Rodrigues to the north-east. In addition to the island of Mauritius, the Republic of Mauritius includes the islands of St. Brandon, Rodrigues and the Agalega Islands. Mauritius attained independence on 12 March 1968 and became a Republic within the Commonwealth in 1992. The population of the Republic of Mauritius was estimated at 1,283,415 as at 31 December 2010.

2. The Mauritian society is the result of successive waves of immigration from different countries. The official language is English, though French and Mauritian kreol are commonly used. The journey from a pre-independence society plagued with problems with a bleak future as predicted by Meade¹ to the current economically vibrant and peaceful society has not been an easy one for Mauritius which is far from its main industrial markets and devoid of natural mineral resources. Today, Mauritius has a per capita income of more than \$7,500, the second highest in Africa, as compared with \$260 at the time of its independence. In 1981, gross domestic product (GDP) per capita measured in 2005 constant international \$ purchasing power parity² was 38 per cent below the world average. By 2009, it had risen to 16 per cent above the average. Over that period, GDP per capita in Mauritius more than tripled in real terms with growth rates that consistently outperformed world and middle income countries average growth. This represents a cumulative growth rate comparable to the ones observed in Singapore, Hong Kong, China, or Taiwan Province of China.

II. Major policy interventions instrumental in helping advance progress on the Millennium Development Goals

3. Mauritius development policies are anchored in the country's vision of a future that is prosperous for all, an inclusive society where there are opportunities for all and where there is equality of treatment before the law. Achievement of this vision is centred on the mission of putting people first to ensure inclusive development.

¹ The most cited reference used to illustrate this point is the report prepared by the Economics Nobel prize winner Jean Edward Meade in 1961. Meade argued that the output for peaceful development in Mauritius was poor due to heavy population pressure and potential for ethnic-based political conflict.

² A purchasing power parity between two countries, A and B, is the ratio of the number of units of country A's currency needed to purchase in country A the same quantity of a specific good or service as one unit of country B's currency will purchase in country B. Purchasing power parities can be expressed in the currency of either of the countries. In practice, they are usually computed among large numbers of countries and expressed in terms of a single currency, with the United States dollar most commonly used as the base or "numeraire" currency.

A. Economic development

4. In 2006, the country reached the end of an economic cycle, one which was based on trade preferences and which had to a large extent contributed to its past success in the "miracle years".³ The country faced other external shocks, such as rising sugar prices and soaring oil prices. On the domestic front, economic growth had slowed, unemployment was at its highest level, with a mismatch of skills preventing the expansion of several sectors, a very high budget deficit and an excessive public debt. During the period 1999-2009, the gross domestic product (GDP) in real terms grew by an annual average of 4.7 per cent. In the same period, GDP per capita grew by 3.3 per cent. By 2010, two other shocks, the financial crisis and the euro crisis added to the list.

Challenges

5. If pairs of hands were sufficient to make Mauritius a politically and economically stable country in the 1970s and 1980s, current economic growth can only be sustained by pairs of "thinking hands". During the current decade, the speed at which information flows is increasing day by day, and the geographical barriers to economic activity are breaking down. Thus, the boundary between what can be and what cannot be traded is being rapidly eroded. New technology and trade are opening up avenues for global markets, while changing global patterns of production leave no choice to the country but to consider other avenues to remain competitive in the global world.

Policy intervention

6. In order to secure the country's survival in a highly competitive, open and globalized economy, the Government has embarked since 2005 on a 10-year economic reform programme structured around four main pillars, namely:

- (a) Fiscal consolidation and public sector efficiency;
- (b) Improving trade competitiveness;
- (c) Improving the investment climate;
- (d) Democratizing the economy through participation, social inclusion and sustainability.

Strategies

7. The strategies are as follows:
- The agriculture sector is being revitalized to emerge as an economic pillar. There is greater orientation towards more modern production of high value-added primary and agro-based products.
 - The sugar sector is being transformed into a cane sector. The use of bagasse for electricity generation and molasses for production of ethanol and value-added spirits is being promoted.

³ The term "Mauritian miracle" was used by external observers to describe the rapid economic growth that the country experienced in the late 1980s.

- In the manufacturing sector, the focus is on the utilization of high technology and production of higher value-added products. For instance, increasing emphasis is being laid on the production of high-quality garments. Export processing zones and non-export processing zone subsectors have been integrated to provide level playing field for small- and medium-sized enterprises.
- The services subsectors are being developed so that they play a pivotal role in the economic growth of the country.
- Tourism efforts focus on enhancing the attractiveness of the island as a destination for nature and eco-tourism; culture, entertainment and the arts; meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions; international sporting events; health-tourism; and shopping and recreational activities.
- The financial services sector is being strengthened in order to position the island as the financial hub for the region.
- The information technology enabled services, business process outsourcing and knowledge process outsourcing sectors are being developed into a vibrant information and communications technology (ICT) hub, leveraging on its prime location, very good network and the bilingualism/multilingualism of the local population.
- The small- and medium-sized enterprises sector has been brought to the forefront of economic development by flattening the playing field and through direct support at every level of operations, such as technical assistance, capacity-building and improving their access to global markets.

During the period 1999 to 2009, GDP in real terms grew by an annual average of 4.7 per cent.

B. Social development

8. The social development of the country has been a direct offshoot of the different policy interventions that have led to a transformation in the way Mauritian society has evolved.

Policy interventions

9. Mauritius has maintained a strong welfare State, in fact, one of the most generous welfare systems in Africa. It provides free health care. It is worth noting that since 2005, the budget for health care has increased by 85 per cent to reach more than Rs7.4 billion in 2010.

Strategies

10. In the field of education, Mauritius is well on its way to attaining its target with regard to the Millennium Development Goals. Education is free at pre-primary, primary, secondary and up to the full-time undergraduate level at the University of Mauritius. The Government has invested heavily in new school infrastructure for both boys and girls. Education is compulsory until the age of 16. Books are free for students at the primary level, and those attending pre-primary education, beginning at age 4, are granted Rs200 per child per month, favouring greater access, equity

and fairness in education. Transport is free to all children attending school, including those attending full-time university courses as well as pensioners, and non-contributory old age pension is given to all citizens. Orphans, widows and a large majority of those requiring special needs also receive a non-contributory monthly pension. Children whose parents are recipients of social aid receive a financial allowance.

11. The Government expenditure on social security and welfare showed an increase of around 63.4 per cent, in the periods from 2003/2004 to 2008/2009.

C. Labour market

12. As in most countries, patterns of employment in Mauritius have also been changing. This is mainly due to the significant structural shift in the Mauritian economy over the past decades, with an economy that was dominated by agriculture and manufacturing being overtaken by a burgeoning service-based one. The Mauritian labour force grew from 510,000 in 2001 to 566,000 in 2009. During the same period the foreign labour force increased from 16,000 to 21,000.

Challenges

13. However, the shift to a service economy and the resultant growth of opportunities in this work has not been without problems.

14. The situation has worsened with the erosion of trade preferences. Traditional sectors, such as manufacturing and agriculture, have been continuously shedding labour, while emerging sectors, such as information technology enabled services-business process outsourcing, financial intermediation, real estate, construction, non-sugar cane agriculture and non-textile manufacturing, have created job opportunities. Throughout the years, Mauritius has left no stone unturned in order to ensure that during the process of job churning, a significant number of jobs is being created. Mauritian and foreign labour forces as well as total employment have been increasing.

15. Without the financial crisis, trends would have most likely continued to result in an outstanding performance in terms of generating enough employment to cover labour force growth. At the same time, the overall unemployment rate fell from 9.5 per cent in 2005 to 7.2 per cent in 2008. This positive performance has been mainly explained by the decline in female unemployment rates. The global crisis impeded the growth in employment in 2009 since it severely affected large establishments. The number of unemployed males increased in 2009, while number of unemployed female remained constant. Nonetheless, total employment still displayed positive growth during the crisis. Interestingly, this result was entirely driven by female employment.

Policy interventions

16. The Workfare Programme has been introduced in order to sustain levels of employment and to improve the quality of services and industry. Under the Employment Rights Act 2008, the Government grants a transition unemployment benefit to every worker whose agreement has been terminated and who has joined

the Workfare Programme, which will be paid for a minimum period of one month and a maximum period of 12 months.

17. A National Employment Policy for Mauritius is also being developed. It provides an active policy framework for achieving the goal of productive employment and decent work for all as well as meeting the employment challenge through well-targeted policies and programmes, while stimulating economic growth and development, meeting manpower requirements, reducing the mismatch of skills, promoting equal pay for equal work and minimizing unemployment and underemployment.

Strategies

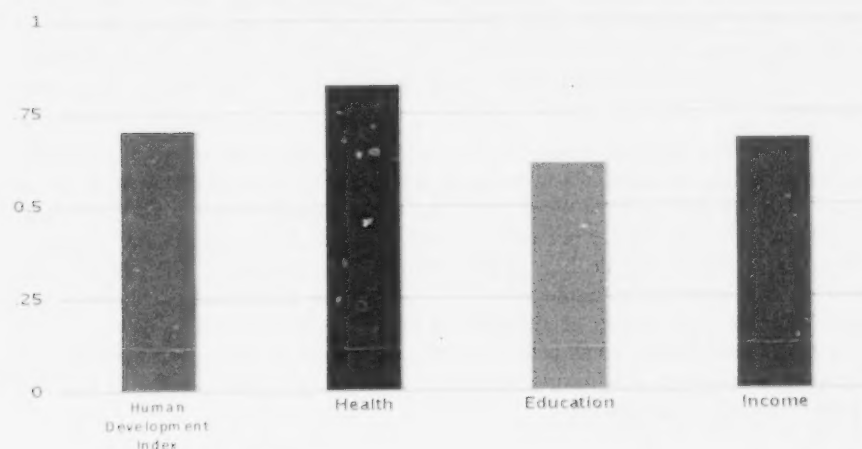
18. Mauritius has developed various programmes, such as a placement for training programme, in order to allow new entrants into the labour market to acquire relevant skills and to allow others to retrain themselves. Through the National Empowerment Foundation, the Government also provides necessary incentives to start a small business. New sectors, like the Land-based Oceanic Industry, which have significant potential for job creation, are being developed.

Mauritius on the global landscape

19. The Human Development Index for Mauritius, between 1980 and 2010, rose by 1.0 per cent annually, from 0.525 to 0.701 in 2010, which gives Mauritius a rank of 72 out of 169 countries with comparable data (see figure 1).

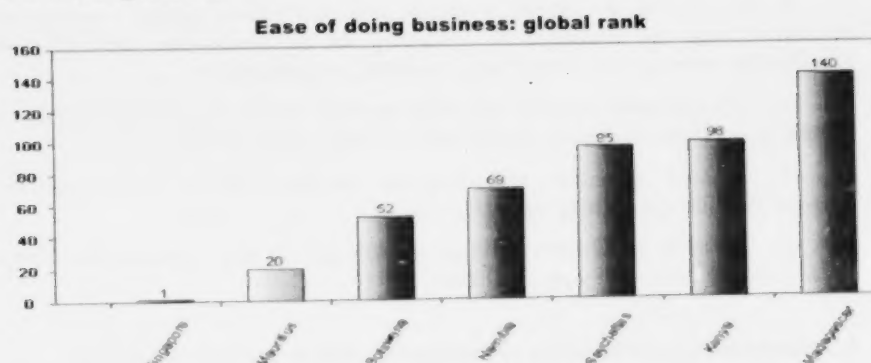
Figure 1

Human Development Index for Mauritius in 2010



20. The Human Poverty Index (which represents a multidimensional alternative to the \$1.25-a-day (purchasing power parity United States \$) poverty measure) was 9.5 per cent in 2007. Mauritius was ranked 45 out of 135 countries.

Figure II
Ease of doing business



21. Mauritius is ranked 20 (first in the African region) out of 183 economies in the *Doing Business 2011* report published by the World Bank. Many countries in Africa look to Mauritius, the region's strongest performer on "Doing Business indicators", as a source of good practices for reform (see figure II).

22. According to *The Global Competitiveness Report 2007-2008*, Mauritius was ranked 60th. This index improved to be pitched at the 55th position in the report published by the World Economic Forum for the year 2010-2011. Mauritius was ranked 73rd in the *Global Innovation Index 2009-2010* overall rankings, with a Global Innovation Index score of 2.93. According to figures compiled by the International Telecommunication Union in the most recent *ICT Development Index* for 2010, Mauritius ranked 2nd in the African region.

D. Role played by various stakeholders in developing policies and lessons learned

23. The institutions involved in policymaking are closely linked with the individual policy stakeholders. Various parts of the Government clearly play key roles in formal policymaking that has increasingly included the participation of a wider range of stakeholders outside of Government. Non-governmental stakeholders participate through advocacy, representation in Government bodies, consultation and policy dialogue with policymakers and on coordination mechanisms. The support of a vibrant private sector also contributes immensely.

24. Policy champions and strong leadership committed to promoting a policy issue are important advocates for policy development and reform. Policy champions can come from any stakeholder group; what is important is that they have access to key decision makers. It is important to develop a continuum of participation in order to obtain buy-in from all direct or indirect stakeholders. This participatory approach renders policy implementation smooth.

III. Sector challenges and strategies to overcome them

25. In the absence of natural resources, and amid fierce global competition, Mauritius faces the challenge of sustaining its socio-economic growth in an eco-friendly environment. To this end, Mauritius is challenged to:

(a) Continuously improve its competitiveness within the global economy by enhancing its creative, skilled and competent human resource base;

(b) Reduce inequality and exclusion through effective socio-economic integration while maintaining the welfare State;

(c) Promote sustainable development through the use of renewable energy while reducing dependency on fossil fuels.

A. Continuous improvement of competitiveness within the global economy through enhancement of a creative, skilled and competent human resource base

26. Prosperity and fairness in the new global economy can be achieved only if world class skills are achieved. Without world class skills, businesses will find it increasingly difficult to compete and innovate. Thus, the success of the developments in the various sectors in Mauritius relies mainly on the availability of skilled labour in the required numbers. Inadequate labour supply could lead to an appreciable slowdown in growth. The delocalization of textile and garment factories from Mauritius to other parts of the world, where the wages are lower, shows that economic activities are increasingly located according to comparative advantage.

27. In the World Economic Forum publication *The Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011*, Mauritius is ranked 55th in terms of global competitiveness. This rank is up two places since the previous year, and directly follows South Africa. The table below shows the ranks attributed to Mauritius by the World Economic Forum. Overall Mauritius is ranked 82nd in terms of its capacity to innovate, with a score of only 3 out of 7. Nonetheless, it is a fact that, in terms of availability of scientists and engineers, Mauritius is lagging behind since it ranks 112th out of 139 in the world.

Table
Ranking of Mauritius (*The Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011*)

	Rank (out of 139 countries)	Score (1-7)
Innovation	82	3.0
Capacity for innovation	76	
Quality for scientific research institutions	86	
Company spending on research and development	64	
University-industry collaboration in research and development	94	
Government procurement of advanced technology products	67	
Availability of scientists and engineers	112	
Utility patents per million population	90	

28. In order to move to a higher plane of development, Mauritius needs a competent and skilled labour force. The present scenario, as shown in figure III, demonstrates that it is perpetuating at the lower levels since its labour force consists of a majority of semi-skilled and unskilled employees, with few professionals and highly skilled persons. All the efforts should converge to have a labour force as shown in figure IV.

Figure III
Trends in skills
and competencies:
present scenario

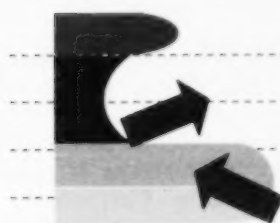


Figure IV
Trends in skills
and competencies:
future scenario



29. Therefore, it is important to promote skills development as well as research and development. The skills available are not adequate to meet the skills in demand. There is a high proportion of mismatch of labour which needs to be corrected if the country wants to follow the appropriate track towards development.

30. Various measures have been initiated by different authorities to bridge the gap of skills supply and skills requirements:

- Placement for Training Programme, mix of work and training
- Circular migration
- Interactive platform for jobseekers and employers (espace des métiers)
- Life Skills Programme
- Special entrepreneurship programme
- Special programme for unemployed women
- Eradication of absolute poverty

These measures are still greatly insufficient in reducing the mismatch significantly. The education sector, especially training centres and universities, have been encouraged to train people in skills according to labour market demand. Institutions such as the Human Resource Development Council have conducted surveys to identify the skills requirements of the country.

31. Skilled workers are more able to adapt quickly and effectively to change. The ability of companies to absorb new technology is linked to a firm's skill composition. The projected strong demand for higher skilled occupations in high-skilled sectors undoubtedly suggests the need for an intensification of human resource supports in high technology areas, but the evidence also signals a parallel need for human resource investment across a wider range of skills. This underlines

the importance of continuous redevelopment of existing education and training policies to cater for the full range of skills needs. Training and retraining programmes should be emphasized for both employers and employees to increase the mobility and adaptability of the nation's workforce towards knowledge-intensive and higher value-added activities.

B. Reducing inequality and exclusion through effective socio-economic integration while maintaining the welfare State

32. The second challenge currently facing the country is reducing inequality and exclusion through effective socio-economic integration while maintaining the welfare State.

33. On the social front, a small proportion of the population is benefiting the least from the economic progress of the past years, and pockets of poverty remain prevalent in specific regions, including Rodrigues. As regards Goal 1 of the Millennium Development Goals, the household budget survey (2006/07) conducted by the Central Statistics Office of Mauritius showed that the proportion of poor households below the relative poverty line (set at the half-median monthly household income per adult equivalent) increased from 7.7 per cent in 2001/02 to 8.0 per cent in 2006/07. Efforts are required to better target and help vulnerable groups, especially women and children.

Policy interventions

34. With the inclusive development paradigm, there is a need to go beyond the established social safety nets and to direct attention to providing jobs and raising the incomes of the poor through explicit policy interventions. In other words, the focus now is on "pro-poor" growth.

Strategies

35. In its endeavour to reduce poverty, the Government of Mauritius launched the Empowerment Programme in 2006, with the following objectives:

- Securing viable employment for the currently unemployed due to industry restructuring
- Encouraging entrepreneurship and improving the capacity and competitiveness of small entrepreneurs, especially in the global market to improve export competitiveness
- Providing transitional support to low-income and vulnerable households for housing
- Enhancing education of the children in the most vulnerable households

36. The Support to Unemployed Women Programme, as part of the Empowerment Programme, aims at widening the circle of opportunities for women and helping them to better exploit these prospects.

37. The Government has also set up the Trust Fund for the Integration of Vulnerable Groups, which had alleviated the plight of some 60,000 vulnerable men, women and children by the end of 2009. The Eradication of Absolute Poverty

Programme has as a subprogramme on integrated community development, which had helped 291 families by the end of 2009. During the same period, another subprogramme of the Eradication of Absolute Poverty, which is a pre-primary school project, had been caring for 511 children from poor families who could not attend classes regularly, with free lunches, transportation, medical examinations, school materials and a programme to ensure that children are in school ("accompagnement scolaire").

38. By the end of 2009, the Trust Fund for the Integration of Vulnerable Groups had provided emergency assistance to almost 3,000 very poor households to build corrugated iron sheet houses at a cost of some Rs160 million. Families with modest incomes also receive financial aid, under the "casting of slabs" scheme introduced in 1997, to add a concrete roof to their house. On average, 4,000 families benefit from this scheme every year. Flour and cooking gas are subsidized for all in Mauritius.

39. A host of measures have also been taken in the education sector since education plays a crucial role in poverty alleviation and in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. These are more fully addressed in part B of the present report.

40. It is important to note that, in a bid to do away with a fragmented and incoherent approach to the issue of poverty eradication, since 2010 the Government has set up a new ministry, the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment that has been invested with the responsibility of acting as an umbrella ministry, thereby coordinating several actions undertaken by both the private and public sectors as well as non-governmental organizations.

41. The State obviously cannot achieve sustainable results on its own. To ensure that the fruits of development are shared by all, the current policy to broaden the circle of opportunities comprises a corporate social responsibility scheme whereby private enterprises contribute a percentage (2 per cent of their book profit) to fund social projects.

42. The principle of equality between men and women is enshrined in the Constitution. Gender equality has been integrated in the national legislation through the Sex Discrimination Act, the Protection from Domestic Violence Act and, most recently, the Equal Opportunities Bill. Institutional mechanisms have been strengthened for more effective service delivery and support to women. A Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare, recently renamed as the Ministry of Gender Equality, is a testimony of the Government's commitment to place women's development high on its agenda, as a key route to growth and development. A National Gender Action Plan outlines a series of measures for the empowerment of women. Strategies include gender mainstreaming in national policies and more specifically in the process of poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth to overcome the feminization of poverty and unemployment.

C. Promoting sustainable development through the use of renewable energy while reducing dependency on fossil fuels

43. Mauritius, being an insular country, has limited access to natural resources. Its energy requirement has more than trebled in the past few decades, and this trend is

expected to continue in the years to come. The major preoccupation of the Government for the coming decades will be in terms of energy consumption, water management and sustainable development. The Government, together with other stakeholders, launched the project "Maurice Ile Durable", and efforts are being pulled together to implement the project.

44. The rising demand in energy and the soaring prices of oil have urged the Government to adopt the strategy of building a green future for Mauritius through the "Maurice Ile Durable" concept, thereby shifting to local renewable sources of energy and away from imported fossil fuel.

45. A "Maurice Ile Durable" fund with wider references aims to step up efforts to protect the environment through recycling, to encourage more efficient use of energy and to increase reliance on renewable energy. The initial results are encouraging.

46. Mauritius climbed to the sixth position in the 2010 Environmental Performance Index from the 58th position in the 2008 rankings. The Index ranks countries on performance indicators covering environmental health, which includes water, air pollution and the environmental burden of disease, and on ecosystem vitality, comprising forestry, fisheries, agriculture, climate change and biodiversity.

47. The challenge for Mauritius is to adapt to the increasingly unpredictable climatic change, the rise in sea level, having a continuous supply of fresh water to all households throughout the year, and to decreasing the use of fossil fuel while achieving a target of 65 per cent autonomy by 2028 through increased utilization of renewable energy and more efficient use of energy.

D. Assistance of international development cooperation in addressing the challenges

48. Assistance must be aligned with national challenges and ownership. Donors must adopt a joint programming modality, coordinated interventions and aid harmonization following priority areas identified by the country.

49. Currently, in Mauritius there is a well-developed mechanism whereby the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development takes a lead role in coordinating all development assistance. It selects priority projects critical for the Government programme on the basis of a business plan whereby these are matched against fields/domains where the development partners have a comparative advantage. This avoids duplication of activities. Obviously, it presupposes that the country already has formulated its country partnership strategy based on the vision of the country and developed it jointly with development partners.

50. While this is a good practice that has worked, it nevertheless has ramifications for line ministries in tapping the relevant and appropriate technical assistance for implementation of their projects.

51. Illustratively, the European Commission has been an active partner to the country through a general budget support programme, which is linked to the achievement of performance indicators, as elaborated in a results matrix covering such sectors as energy, environment, wastewater, sugar, education and empowerment sectors.

E. Promotion of policy coherence among various sectors that directly or indirectly impact development

52. In an increasingly interdependent world, domestic policy space is subject to global forces and to rules governing international trade and finance. For this reason, policy coherence, especially with respect to trade and finance, is also required at the global level to support project outcomes at the national level.

53. Coherence can be promoted at different levels: within development cooperation, between aid and non-aid policies of one donor country, between donors, and between donors and recipients. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development definition, policy coherence for development means working to ensure that the objectives and results of a Government's development policies are not undermined by other policies of the Government that have an impact on developing countries, and that these other policies support development objectives, where feasible.

54. As national or international interests compete, fully coherent policies are often not feasible. Development is not the only goal of Government policy, and competing interests, such as employment, safety standards for consumers, environmental quality and moral convictions, carry a lot of weight. In a democracy, these competing interests will lead to compromises; within the compromises, the extent to which some interests override others is a matter of stakeholder power and political position.

Part B

IV. Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education: education sector

55. Mauritius subscribes to the major education-related conventions and goals as encapsulated in both the Education for All initiative and the Millennium Development Goals. In fact, the economic and social cohesion policies of a multiracial, multilingual and multi-ethnic Mauritius are aligned with the Millennium Development Goals indicators.

56. A well-educated population is essential to a country's economic and social development. Societies therefore have an intrinsic interest in ensuring that children and adults have access to a wide variety of educational opportunities. Mauritius has systematically shown a high level of commitment to the provision of educational opportunities for all, based on the conviction that, if early childhood programmes prepare children for primary education and provide opportunities to enhance and complement their educational experiences at home while helping to combat linguistic and social disadvantages, primary and secondary education for their part lay the foundation for the development of a broad range of competences and prepare young people to become lifelong learners and productive members of society.

A. Basic facts about education

57. In general, Mauritius has achieved or nearly achieved a number of the fundamental Millennium Development Goals. The net enrolment rate in primary education is 96 per cent (2010), with 98 per cent of female and male pupils respectively reaching grade 6, the last year of primary schooling, and with 82 per cent of pupils progressing to secondary schools, while the gross tertiary enrolment rate currently stands at 47 per cent.

58. With education and human capital development recognized as being central to development, the Government of Mauritius has focused on education as one of the priority areas in its national development strategy. Since independence in 1968, several initiatives have been undertaken and heavy investment made in close collaboration with the private sector in providing access to education.

59. Education is not only free but also compulsory for all up to the age of 16 since January 2005; basic education therefore covers 11 years of education. Education has been free through the secondary level since 1977, for full-time undergraduate programmes at the University of Mauritius since 1988, and has been partly subsidized for the second public university, the University of Technology, Mauritius.

Literacy rate

60. Over the 10-year period from 1990 to 2000, the literacy rate increased from 80.8 to 85.0 per cent, the rate being highest among adults aged 55 and over. A higher literacy rate is observed in Rodrigues compared to the mainland. The literacy rate for the age group 15-24 years was 94.5 per cent, as measured by the census of 2000. The higher literacy rate for females for this age group indicates a reversal of the situation that had previously prevailed.

Educational attainment

61. Educational attainment is one of the measures of school outcomes and it is often measured by end-of-cycle examinations at three key stages, namely, the Certificate of Primary Education at the end of primary cycle and the Cambridge School Certificate and Higher School Certificate at the end of secondary cycle. While the upper secondary graduation rate does not guarantee that an education system has adequately equipped its graduates with the basic skills and knowledge necessary to enter the labour market, since this indicator does not capture the quality of educational outcomes, it does provide, however, an indication of the extent to which an education system succeeds in preparing students to meet the minimum requirements of the labour market. On average, the number of years of education measured against the above-mentioned examination system, which regulate the flow of students from one level to the next, is around 10 years.

62. This falls short of the country's goal of providing 11 years of schooling to all.

63. In line with the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All goals, focus in the paragraphs below will be exclusively on the pre-primary, primary and secondary subsectors, even though a great number of innovations are currently afoot to revamp the higher education subsector in a bid to transform Mauritius into a knowledge hub.

B. Challenges in the system

64. Notwithstanding the very high level of participation of Mauritian children in the schooling process (nearing 100 per cent, with 96 per cent at pre-primary and a survival rate of 98 per cent at primary) and free access at the secondary level as well as total gender parity in enrolment in the system, there are still some serious challenges to be addressed.

Dropouts

65. The yearly rate of dropouts at the primary level is around 0.5 per cent. At the secondary level every year, about 1.5 per cent of students leave the system before reaching the fourth year of secondary schooling. In addition, about 9 per cent of students enrolled in the pre-vocational stream (which caters for the double failures at the Certificate of Primary Education) do not complete the third year of pre-vocational education. These children enter adolescence ill-prepared for work, further schooling and the practicalities of coping with life.

Ensuring successful completion of schooling

66. The real issue for the country is to ensure that all children successfully complete secondary education. Currently, around 35 per cent of children fail to obtain the Certificate of Primary Education. Of these, about 20 per cent repeat the Certificate, and those having failed it twice or who have reached the age of 13 are enrolled in the three-year pre-vocational stream. A cohort analysis reveals that, out of 100 children entering grade 1, only 27 complete the last grade at upper secondary. Thus, the challenge today remains the successful completion of primary and secondary education by all since it is upper secondary education that serves as the foundation for advanced learning and training opportunities as well as preparation for direct entry into the labour market.

Rote memorization

67. An end-of-cycle examination, which serves a dual purpose of certification and selection for secondary schools, has led to a culture of competition that is deeply entrenched. This is reflected in a teaching style that is assessment-oriented, resulting in teaching-to-the-test and rote memorization rather than developing the ability of learners to indulge in some level of critical thinking. It also results in concentration on core examinable subjects, rather than on those areas that would serve the interest of the holistic development of the learner.

Private tuition

68. This parallel form of education has long plagued the system. By focusing on student outcomes (as measured exclusively by quantifiable outcomes, such as pass rates, completion rates, etc.), there is an inherent danger for the current system of examination-centred teaching and learning, school selection and tracking processes, as well as private tuition, to be perpetuated by the system. Private tuition is hence a deep-rooted phenomenon that has to be addressed holistically and in an integrated manner.

C. Education and Human Resource Strategy Plan 2008-2020

69. All of the above-mentioned issues are fully addressed in the Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan 2008-2020, which constructs the following vision for the sector:

A quality education for all and a human resource development base to transform Mauritius into an intelligent nation State in the vanguard of global progress and innovation.

Emphasis is thus placed on the following main pillars of education and training: increasing access; improving quality; broadening equity; and ensuring contextual relevance and higher-order excellence (see box below).

Education and Human Resource Strategy Plan 2008-2020

Education sector objectives

1. To ensure that all children aged 3 to 5 years in Mauritius have the opportunity to develop their individual intellectual, socio-emotional and psycho-motor skills to the best of their capacity in order to build the confidence and self-esteem in learning that will not only prepare them for the next level (primary school) but, more importantly, lay the foundations for learning that will support them throughout their lifetime.
2. To sustain equitable access to quality education, ensuring that all learners attain high levels of achievement in literacy, numeracy, information and communications technology and such essential life skills as sound human values, healthy lifestyle and so forth as the basis for lifelong learning and good citizenship.
3. To ensure that all students are given the opportunity to embark on and complete higher secondary education for employability and higher and further education and training with the required maturity and confidence.
4. To build a system that ensures a supply of quality personnel that work collegially with a strong management and quality assurance system to improve and support learning achievement and overall development of all learners.
5. To provide an efficient and effective technical and vocational education and training system of greater public esteem responsive to the present and future needs by having a skilled and flexible workforce.
6. To make Mauritius an intelligent island, a knowledge hub to serve the region and a centre for higher learning and excellence.
7. To build a creative and competent human resource base for Mauritius for sustainable national development.
8. To develop the Ministry into an efficient, effective and accountable functioning public institution.

V. Innovations in the education sector

70. The Ministry has, in line with the Education and Human Resource Strategy Plan 2008-2020, initiated action on a host of innovative measures that act as policy levers in accelerating the educational transformation process. These include but are not restricted to:

- Introduction of innovative pedagogical practices through, inter alia, the Enhancement Programme, continuous assessment and remedial education.
- Review of the curriculums of all education subsectors for increased relevance. While curriculums and syllabi existed, for the first time a curriculum framework has been developed for pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education.
- Widening access to upper secondary education that has been traditionally limited because of restrictive administrative criteria.
- Improvement in educational infrastructure.
- Promotion of the holistic development of the learners through the promotion of co- and extra-curricular activities focusing on a healthy lifestyle, civic education, sustainable development and promotion of arts and of literacy so as to help them develop self-confidence and self-esteem. This has now become an integral part of the official curriculum in secondary schools.
- Triggering of a digital revolution in the education system.
- Introduction of new modes of assessment for benchmarking purposes.
- Re-engineering of the pre-vocational education policy to cover a four-year programme that will provide the right blend of basic literacy, numeracy, vocational and social skills.

Pro-poor policies

Policies and support measures pertaining to equity and quality issues

71. It is widely recognized today that the issue of access to basic education, including to pre-primary and secondary education, has been universally addressed. All efforts are today oriented towards ensuring greater equity and quality improvement in the system.

72. The prevailing wisdom today suggests that low-quality education renders trainability difficult and restricts the scope for future employment. The move is accordingly towards a new phase in education where the wealth of a nation will be measured by the skills and knowledge of its people, the most important levers to create wealth and reduce social deprivation.

73. Eradication of absolute poverty is high on the national agenda, and vulnerable groups have to be empowered through education, training and skills enhancement.

74. The provision of an inclusive education has today taken the forms set out below.

1. Concerns for children with special education needs

75. Children currently being catered for in special education needs schools/units represent only around 53 per cent of the estimated total population of children with special educational needs and whose needs are not currently being met.

76. In 2006, the Ministry developed a national policy and strategy document for the special education needs sector in order to respond to both the specific and emerging educational needs of all the children concerned. The document lays emphasis on the need to adopt a child-centred pedagogical approach as well as a flexible and adapted curriculum that will help each child to develop his or her full potential.

77. In order to successfully attain the strategic objectives set for the special education needs sector, the following four crucial elements are being worked on today:

- (a) An appropriate curriculum along with an adapted pedagogy;
- (b) An appropriate quality assurance framework to harmonize the level of educational services dispensed by the different stakeholders involved in the sector;
- (c) Capacity-building programmes for trainers and teaching personnel;
- (d) An appropriate regulatory framework to ensure the provision of adapted and quality education services so as to cater to the different types of special needs/disabilities of children aged between 3 and 20 years.

2. Provision of quality pre-primary education

78. The following measures are part of policy developments to address the above-mentioned issue:

- (a) Strengthening the institutional and regulatory framework for the provision of early childhood care and education;
- (b) Reduction of disparity among preschools;
- (c) Addressing the problem of out-of-schools pre-primary children due to absolute poverty;
- (d) Developing a national curriculum framework for the pre-primary subsector;
- (e) Ensuring readiness of all pre-primary schoolchildren for primary school;
- (f) Construction of pre-primary units in disadvantaged areas;
- (g) Strengthening partnerships with parents through a parent empowerment programme.

79. Special efforts have been made to reach out to the 15 per cent of children aged 3 and 4 years, who are not attending school, most of whom came from vulnerable families.

80. Children in families living in poverty are supported through the Empowerment Programme for the Eradication of Absolute Poverty which:

- (a) Ensures that poor children of pre-primary school-going age attend school;
- (b) Provides these children with school materials, a free lunch and free transport;
- (c) Provides parents with a decent job with sustainable income under the training and placement programme;
- (d) Provides life skills mentoring to ensure the proper management of family affairs.

3. "Zones d'éducation prioritaires"

81. Primary schools that scored 40 per cent or less at Certificate of Primary Education examinations for five consecutive years have been classified as "Zep" schools. The 30 such schools, including one in Rodrigues and two in Agalega, are in or close to poverty areas with many social problems.

82. Based on the notion of positive reinforcement, the zones d'éducation prioritaires project aims at reducing school and social inequalities by providing equitable opportunities to the schoolchildren as part of affirmative action. It hence aims at mobilizing all the resources within the zones to contribute to raising the standard of achievement of the school.

4. Other measures that ensure a level playing field

83. Other measures include:

(a) Introduction of Kreol Morisien (mother tongue) and Bhojpuri (ancestral language) as optional subjects at school. This is a major novelty, and all modalities pertaining to curriculum development, the production of textbooks and training of teachers are being looked into to ensure the introduction of these languages in primary schools beginning in 2012. This multilingualism will help to cement the cardinal virtue of multiculturalism, especially, the interculturalism that is called upon to be the mainstay of Mauritian society;

(b) The provision of a subsidy for fees for the Cambridge School Certificate and Higher School Certificate to ensure that students from poor families taking part in those examinations are given every support to complete their cycles of study and that they are not handicapped on grounds of affordability. This measure provides them with further avenues for a smooth transition to post-secondary education;

(c) The review of the existing laureate scheme (which offers fully funded scholarships for overseas studies to the best candidates at the Higher School Certificate examinations) aims at bringing more equity into the system and providing opportunities to bright students from low-income families who would otherwise have been deprived of a scholarship although they are highly meritorious. This will be phased in next year. In addition, the Human Resource, Knowledge and Arts Development Fund ensures that scholarships are provided for post-secondary and tertiary studies in recognized higher education institutions to underprivileged students. Under the same scheme, bank loans are also guaranteed by the Ministry for those whose families have no assets;

(d) Free transport (including bus facilities in some cases) is provided to all schoolchildren as well as university students;

(e) Textbooks are freely provided to all primary schoolchildren while at the secondary level; the "Books for the Needy" scheme caters to children coming from economically vulnerable groups.

VI. Issue of gender disparity in primary and secondary education

84. The Government's commitment towards gender equality is expressed in the National Gender Policy Framework, 2008, which strives to fulfil the following vision:

A society in which all girls and boys, women and men live together in dignity, safety, mutual respect, harmony and social justice; thrive in an enabling environment in which they are able to achieve their full potential, in full enjoyment of their human rights, are equal partners in taking decisions to shape economic, social and cultural development, in determining the values that guide and sustain such development and equally enjoy its benefits.

85. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2003/04*, gender equality refers to the notion of boys and girls experiencing the same advantages or disadvantages in attending school, receiving teaching methods, curriculums and academic orientation and producing equal learning achievement and subsequent life opportunities.

86. As far as access is concerned, there are no gender gaps or disparities in enrolment at the pre-primary, primary, secondary and post-secondary levels. The ratio of girls to boys in primary school is very high — at around 97 per cent — while at the secondary and tertiary levels, girls dominate, with a ratio of over 100 per cent. Boys and girls are offered the same curriculum in co-educational settings.

87. There have been ongoing efforts to address gender disparity, for example, by removing gender stereotypes from the school curriculum and school textbooks. Yet, notwithstanding the above advances, new areas of gender disparity have emerged that require immediate attention. The performance of boys is found to be lagging behind that of girls at all levels and boys at the primary school level are found to have lower reading skills than girls. This has resulted in a larger proportion of boys among repeaters and in the pre-vocational classes. The problem that has to be addressed is whether these figures indeed show a gender disparity or whether it is a system disparity caused by an educational process dictated by competition during the early formative primary school years where girls are known to have a higher cognitive development.

88. It is pertinent to remain alert on the issue so as to address the fundamental issue of equity. The Education and Human Resource Strategy Plan 2008-2010 recommends that an education sector gender policy consistent with the principles and operational strategies of the National Gender Policy Framework be developed in order to ensure that equal opportunities are given to both sexes, with a view to achieving gender equality in learning achievement.

VII. Other Education for All goals

89. The final section of the present report will broadly examine goals 3, 4 and 6 of the Education for All initiative and indicate actions taken to attain them.

Goal 3: Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes

90. Education is compulsory for ages 5 to 16. Learning and life skills are offered as formal programmes. Provision is equally made for those pupils who have not succeeded in their primary schooling and who are thereby not eligible for secondary schooling. A three-year pre-vocational education stream has been created in secondary schools alongside secondary mainstream education to provide an alternative general education to these children. They can subsequently join the vocational stream after having followed a foundation course.

91. Policies also focus on broadening the opportunities of young people who missed out on education in their early years. Through a "Second Chance" programme, all young people under 21, who are not in full-time education or full-time employment are provided basic numeracy and language skills and oriented to a vocational programme so as to develop their skills for the start of a sustainable livelihood.

Goal 4: Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults

92. The adult literacy rate for the age population of ages 15 and above stands at 84.3 per cent (census 2000 figures) and is slightly lower among females (80.5 per cent) as opposed to males (88.2 per cent).

93. Life skills programmes, basic and continuing education and literacy programmes are dispensed through non-formal institutions. This responsibility does not fall solely under the mandate of the Ministry of Education but rather is spread among several ministries, non-formal institutions and non-governmental organizations. Such programmes include the following:

- (a) Core skill training programmes designed to include basic core skills, including literacy and numeracy among the lower grade workforce, so as to make them more employable and able to adjust easily to the changing economic environment;
- (b) Training for retrenched workers, especially females, under the Empowerment Programme;
- (c) On-the-job training to meet the challenges of the changing work environment.

Goal 6: Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills

94. The curriculum is an important element that has been given due consideration since it provides the tools to facilitate the development of a more inclusive system.

A renewal of the curriculum has accordingly been embarked upon at the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels. Built into the new curriculum is a holistic system of assessment to ensure that learning outcomes are met.

95. While efforts are made at the pre-primary level to standardize teaching and learning and to adopt the best practices that will be most suited to the overall development of the child, an assessment tool is being developed to ensure readiness of the children for primary education.

96. Assessment is also integrated into the new competence-based primary school curriculum, as follows:

(a) The baseline profiling at the start of primary schooling gives an indication of the learner's acquisition of skills and competencies at the end of the preschool cycle and aims at addressing learning deficits so that all children start on the same footing;

(b) A diagnostic assessment implemented at grade 3 aims at mapping the weaknesses and strengths of pupils after two years of primary schooling for early remediation;

(c) The Remedial Education Strategy provides the intervention measures for improvement in attainment level. The strategy looks at a wider range of considerations besides the cognitive; it targets the physical, social, psychological and mental development of the learner;

(d) The Continuous Assessment Scheme, with its merits of regularity, feedback and performance-based tasks, will make students become better learners, develop self-confidence and perform autonomously.

97. Besides school-based assessments, the country also takes part in regional and international assessment studies, which help both to provide a skill profile of learners and to serve as a means of measuring national progress against international benchmarks.

Challenges

98. The challenges to these initiatives remain the setting up of a dedicated evaluation unit anchored within the Ministry of Education as an umbrella unit to better coordinate the monitoring and evaluation of the above-named interventions. Integrating the element of accountability throughout the whole school system that demands achievement in return for investment has yet to be put in place.

VIII. Conclusion

99. It is an undisputable fact that national education policies will continue to be shaped by global forces, dictated by the economic imperative. Success in this increasingly competitive and globalized environment depends on the level of skills and knowledge of the workforce. This demands that Mauritius maintain a high level of investment in human capital, which is not an option, but a necessity. The performance of the education system has today to be measured in terms of outcomes and international benchmarking, all set within a competitive framework. At the same time, the national education system of Mauritius will be measured by the extent to which it assists the most vulnerable individuals, where learning achievement is

independent of whether learners have a socio-economic disadvantage or special education needs. The State is thus called upon to balance policies that subscribe to increased competitiveness and social justice.